

other people were using words before we either answer them, or contradict them, or do as they advise."

MRS. M. E. BOOLE.

The above paper was written by me from Mrs. Boole's dictation. I wish I could reproduce in Mrs. Boole's own forcible words the side thoughts which such dictation brought forward. I think that perhaps the most emphasized thought was, that, though some may smile and say that such lessons as these are childish and unnecessary, in reality they tend to get the child's mind into the proper attitude for receiving scientific, and especially mathematical, teaching. To understand such abstract subjects as algebra, the child's mind should be prepared long beforehand by some such simple lessons as these; he must be taught to reason; to see the relation things bear to one another; to be able to distinguish between "likes" and "equals." When such an attitude of mind is established by early training, no difficulty will be experienced in putting before the child abstract ideas.

That some preliminary teaching is necessary will be readily acknowledged by all thoughtful teachers of any experience. If we attempt to explain the niceties of logical inference in the middle of an algebra lesson it interrupts the train of thought and confuses the pupil, and, moreover, the subject of the algebra lesson being abstract, it is very difficult to point out to the child where his mode of reasoning has been faulty; the habit of accurate inference should have been established long before, and in connection with objects already quite familiar to the child (*e.g.*, pennies, counters, gnats, and canary birds). If the habit is rightly established from the beginning, algebraic process will not need to be explained to the child, each when presented to him will take its place as the abstract expression of some mental process already quite familiar.

EDITOR.

## OUR RECREATION.

THERE has been some disappointment among the Committee of the Students' Association on account of the failure to establish Magazine or other Reading Clubs among the members. Although I have joined a very small circle that was finally formed, I am not sure that, considering how constantly we are occupied with intellectual work, it is not wiser to devote as much as possible of one's spare time to other forms of recreation than that found in books. Our work alone, if we do it thoroughly, ought to provide us with sufficient mental food, for every subject suggests some fresh question, and every teacher at one time or another may be seen immersed in the inexhaustible *Britannica Encyclopædia*. One piece of fresh information gained per diem is not to be despised even from the point of view of the savant, or, as I suppose I should say, "savante." Work over, and lessons for the next day prepared, one feels a desire to explore fresh fields and pastures new, and these are not, as a rule, to be found within the pages of a novel (I grant, however, there are notable exceptions). There will only be time and space in this short paper to say a few words upon one form of recreation which is not often considered to rank among the amusements of life. I speak of Conversation. Far more exciting than a novel, for here the plots and characters unfolding before your eyes are real, it has the same fascination as a Nature Note-book or any other form of Art, for it is Nature's own facile method of self-expression. There are some people of high ideals who prefer to take the modest attitude of listener, and one is quite grateful to them if the room has brilliant talkers; these are, moreover, as a rule, very pleasant people to live with, but if they would make an effort to converse when the society is not so distinguished, they might benefit others, and would soon succumb themselves to the charm of convincing and being convinced. Argument is really a pleasure, and there is no form of teaching that is more effectual. It has been very truly said: what we cannot express we do not know; and after a long talk, in which it has been necessary to state one's views in proper examination



form, I have been amazed to find how many real views I hold. The mist rolls away from one's mental landscape and the possibilities of the country become defined. Added to this, concentration and perception are put into full play if one would follow the enemy's line of thought, and how much more easily this is done when one is all the while preparing to retort with a decided affirmative or denial! I am sure the long hours of lecture would be far more fruitful if they oftener were made to take the form of a debate. Of course we (the students) can hardly hope to rival the salons of Paris, though it might be possible, judging from the newspaper reports, to compete with Wednesday afternoons in the House of Commons. "A man's reach, however, must exceed his grasp" (forgive that much abused quotation), and if we aim at a salon we may perhaps learn how to be interested and interesting in an obscure English drawing-room. Some of you will say that no one cares to listen to a person who is not witty, and wit is a gift of the gods not generously awarded to women. This is fairly true, but, on the other hand, even *Punch* may pall, and the wittiest saying in the world is not generally the most salient. There is a weapon greater than wit with which we may challenge the most redoubtable enemy that ever rose to a talking duel, and that is individuality. If we only remembered it, no thoughts are like our thoughts, no mind like our mind, no views exactly our views. We think and speak broadly on the same lines; we act in masses; to the distant spirits regarding us from afar without the aid of a magnifying glass we are no doubt but a medley of moving ants. It is, however, a fact that no thumb-print is like its fellow. What matter then, seeing you have individuality, personality — your divine You — if you have neither wit to be funny nor learning to be wise? The sagacity to be silent when you have nothing to say, the courage to speak when you have, these will carry you always with pleasure, and sometimes with glory through a hundred dinner-parties.

It is the custom in these regenerate days to do everything so well that the doing is perforce limited to the smallest possible circle of those who devote their lives to a speciality. In consequence, our amateurs, using the word as opposed to professionals, are rapidly becoming extinct. It is plaintive pride that prevents the mediocre musician from performing on her instrument in the presence of several like herself, and

which of us would not be guilty of it? The same applies to all the Arts, chiefly however to the very fine one of Conversation. I once heard it said of Sir Henry Irving that no one cares to speak when he is in the room, because they wish to catch every word that falls from his lips. I am not going to combat this condition of things, the existence of which is after all a tribute to our understanding, but just as all should study music, painting, and acting, up to the point of appreciation of the best in those arts, so should one study conversation. Sir Henry will then have a still larger audience, and who knows what latent possibilities one may possess of becoming an Irving oneself? There have been writers who wrote one famous book and then forever laid aside their pen; there are painters of one picture and singers of one song, and both picture and song have stirred the heart of the world more surely than the superfluity of the prolific. Is it not possible that your one inspired word should find a responsive echo somewhere? and is it not a pity that for lack of exercise or courage you should fail to play your particular part?

To put it educatively, as I suppose I must do if I would keep the end of *L' Umile Pianta* in view, for the benefit of your pupils if not for yourselves, I would shut my book in the winter evenings and go down to the drawing-room to entertain and to be entertained. Moreover, whether you teach boys or girls, above all things encourage them to talk and to listen. Even riddles at dinner or tea are better than nothing, but I usually find children are tremendously interested in current events, and will make a great effort to grasp a situation which they know is existing.

The Dreyfus case was like a continued story to some of my little boys. To this day they are never tired of it, though the glory of war has dimmed some of its fascination. It is a never-ending source of interest to them that these things happening now will be read by *their* children in the school history books. I have all my Latin examination papers to set this evening, and then the most comical geography papers to correct, so I must write no more.

I hope next time somebody will enlarge upon golden silence. I know quite well they would have the best of the argument, but it would be in any case refreshing to see the other point of view from another pen.

F. R.